The WITHERED FIG TREE

E. M. POTEAT

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R. I. Wilson

Central BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
presented by

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KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

THE WITHERED FIG TREE

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THE WITHERED FIG TREE.

STUDIES IN STEWARDSHIP.

By

EDWIN McNEILL POTEAT, 1861-

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"*He found nothing but leaves.*"—Mark 11 : 13

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FOREWORD

PASTORS, teachers of men's classes, and students in general will welcome "*Studies in Stewardship,*" by Dr. Edwin M. Poteat.

Many inquiries coming from pastors and leaders have revealed the great need of such a series of discussions as is here presented. The author's clear, strong grasp of his subject and the materials he brings together, unite to make this treatment of great value for study groups in churches, student conferences, and institutes. The book seeks to make clear the fundamental principles underlying the Stewardship Movement, and furnishes a basis for the organization of local leagues or groups of Christian stewards.

Never before has there been so wide and deep an interest in the conception of stewardship here presented. Nor has there been so clear an appreciation of the relation of stewardship to the

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whole program of the kingdom of God. All Christian enterprise is assured of a great lunge forward when the whole church of Christ lays hold of and puts into practise the principles expounded in these studies.

The questions with which each chapter is opened will be found of special value in stimulating discussion and encouraging outside reading. Many of them afford excellent themes for debate.

"The Missionary Review of the World" has granted permission for the reprint here of Chapter IV, entitled "Unrighteous Stewards." The life testimonies, for obvious reasons, appear here without the names of their authors. They are vouched for as authentic.

The Department of Missionary Education recommends the use of this book for study-class purposes in local churches, young people's societies, and adult groups. Church Schools and Missions should include among the books for specific study "The Withered Fig Tree—Studies in Stewardship."

WILLIAM A. HILL.

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I

FORFEITED STEWARDSHIP

Anger or Acted Parable?

Renan said that Jesus lost his temper when he came to the fig tree and, expecting figs to appease his hunger, found nothing but leaves. Said he, "Let there be no fruit from thee henceforward forever. And immediately the fig tree withered away" (Matt. 21 : 19). Certain it is that hungry men, as many wives can testify, are usually out of temper. But Renan has entirely missed the point of this acted parable. Our Lord did not lose his temper and vent his spite on a tree. We know him too well to believe him capable of such an outburst. No; he was giving a lesson of great national significance. This appears later in the same chapter when speaking to the leaders of the Jewish nation and using "fruit" as his figure of speech, he said, "Therefore the kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21 : 43). It is the lesson of

National Stewardship

Special Capacities Imply a Special Mission

There can be no question that God commits certain capacities, gifts, principles, resources, to nations, and charges them with a certain mission to the world. Horace Bushnell taught us that every man's life is a plan of God; and the fig-tree incident, with our Lord's interpretation of it, admonishes us that every nation has its special place and work in the purpose of God. (Compare Acts 17 : 26.)

The Jews

The Mission of the Jewish Nation: Their Great Contributions to the World

Look at the Jewish nation, for example. They were the "chosen people," appointed to the religious leadership of the world. Abraham was the father of the men of faith; and all the great religious ideas in circulation today are God's gift to mankind through the Jewish race. Here are some of these: God is One (monotheism); he is moral ("Jehovah loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity"); he is a Redeemer. And this religious leadership the Jewish nation held till they rejected Jesus and his final revelation of the redeeming grace of God. Thereupon the fig tree withered to the roots, and it has borne no fruit to this hour. Jews have been leaders in other

The Withered Fig Tree

spheres—in philosophy, in music, in finance, in statecraft. But in religion the only contributions they have made have been made by men like Paul, who saw in Jesus the fulfilment of God's purpose for his nation and for the world. It is a case of forfeited stewardship and rejection from the religious leadership of the world.

Religious Leader Today

Greeks and Romans

Look at the classic nations, the Greeks and Romans. They too had their special gifts and their special mission in the life of the world. The special gifts of the Greeks lay in the fields of literature, philosophy, the fine arts. The single community of Athens produced in a comparatively brief period thirty men who have never been surpassed in eminence. They gave to the world a perfect language, and they wrote in it masterpieces for all time; while in the plastic arts and architecture their achievements remain to this day supreme. The special gifts of the Romans lay in the field of constructive social organization, of politics in the broad sense, and of law in the sense of jurisprudence. In a word, they organized a world-empire and bound it to their city by a system of roads unmatched in all history till the advent of the steam locomotive.

The Special Gifts and Mission of the Greeks; of the Romans

Their Contributions to the World

The Triple Cord

"The Fulness of the Times." A Threefold Preparation for the Coming of Christ

Evidently God had a plan in the life of the Jews, Greeks, Romans; and looking back from our point of vantage we can read it clear and plain. For here is a great conjuncture in history—a gospel, a language, an empire which adopted the principle of religious toleration. The Greeks furnished the vehicle, the Romans built the roads for the carrying throughout the world of a gospel which had been given through the Jews. And it may be argued, as Matthew Arnold did, that the Greeks and Romans were more faithful to their stewardship than the Jews, though in fairness it should be said that they had no such crucial and tragic test of their loyalty as was involved for the Jews in the disguise of flesh and blood their Messiah wore when he appeared among them.

The Too Complete Disguise. John 1 : 10

United States—Trustee of Democracy

The Mission of the United States

There is a tremendous lesson here for the nations of today, and particularly for the United States. Let me recall two familiar quotations. Gladstone said the United States afforded "a natural basis for the greatest continuous empire ever founded by man." Emerson said, "Our

whole history looks like a last effort of divine providence on behalf of humanity."

Trustee of Democracy: The Age-long Struggle with Despotism

1. Note our trusteeship of great political principles and ideals. Throughout history there has been but one political struggle, the struggle between Despotism and Democracy; and if you listen to the voice of the centuries rather than to the voice of the decades and the years, you will see that Democracy has steadily gained. On this continent these two principles met on the heights of Abraham at Quebec, and John Fiske said that the victory of Wolfe over Montcalm was "the greatest turning-point yet discernible in modern times." One would like to hear Fiske today (as Tennyson said of Francis of Assisi, "Sweet St. Francis, would that he were here again!"). Mr. Fiske would give us luminous interpretations of the great events transpiring before our eyes: the Republic of China (1911), the Balkan Wars, the Great War with the Russian Revolution, the fall of Turkey, the dismemberment of the Hapsburg Empire, the democratization of Germany, etc., etc. Words of Joseph Cook uttered thirty-five years ago sound now like prophecy. Speaking of the approaching debacle in Turkey he said, "The crescent is the crescent of a waning moon, and in the

The Battle of Quebec

sky where it lingers as a ghost the sun is rising and God behind it."

The March of Democracy

Yes; Democracy has won through history and is winning today all around the globe. The last seats of privilege are trembling; our God is marching on.

The Two Cardinal Principles of Our Democracy

More than any other people on earth, the United States is entrusted with the principle of Democracy, with preserving the balance of local self-government and federal union. In the Civil War we had our baptism of blood, and the government was put to awful hazard. But when the storm had passed, a man of the people stood on the bloodiest field of them all and pledged the whole nation that government of the people, by the people, and for the people should not perish from the earth. And, please God, it never shall.

Lincoln at Gettysburg

A Free Church

Freedom in Religion the Right of Every one

2. But note a still more precious treasure which is committed to our charge—a free Church in a free State. If it is important that the state be free, it is more important that religion be free. If the principle of despotism has no place in government, still less has it rights in the realm of the soul. And here especially our history looks like a last attempt of divine providence

on behalf of humanity. Consider some dates. America was discovered in 1492, North America was settled in 1608 (Jamestown) and 1620 (Plymouth); that is, not for a hundred years and more. Why was this? All one can say is that in the century intervening between 1492 and 1608-20 events of significance for the whole history of the race occurred—the Protestant Reformation (1517) and the destruction of the Spanish Armada (1588). God seems to have reserved the north temperate zone of the new world till after the gospel was rediscovered by Luther and the power of Philip II had been broken, and for a people who were driven out of England and France by defections in those countries toward Rome, which then stood and now stands for the principle of despotism in religion. Today the Romish hierarchy is trying to recapture by zeal and astuteness the country which was lost to the Pope in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by the work of the providence of God.

Between 1492 and 1608-20 in Europe

Luther—Philip II

Duke of Alva

Evangelical Christianity is held in trust for the world by the great free Christian bodies of the United States (and Europe) who oppose all priestly religions by their ardent faith in the priesthood of all believers, who carry no taint

Our Trusteeship of Pure Christianity for the World

of salvation by works in their theology, and none of the toggery of Rome among their old clothes, and whom none can suspect of leaning on the state for help in carrying on their work in the world.

Our Special Mission

The Religious Meaning of Our Vast Natural Wealth

3. Surely to be made trustees of pure democracy and pure religion is enough. And it is enough to suggest a special mission for this nation. But we are also entrusted with a money-making capacity which taxes our arithmetic to compute, and with natural resources only beginning to be realized upon.

Great States at Peace

4. We are also God's trustees of the ideal of world peace. We furnish Europe the example of great States dwelling together in unity, and for a hundred years we have left a frontier of over three thousand miles without a fort. It was an American President (Taft) who first proposed that all questions between nations be submitted to an international court of arbitral justice.

Democracy in Government, Democracy in Religion, Wealth, World Peace; we are the chosen people to preserve these on behalf of, and to share them with, all mankind.

The Jewish race is a tragic example of a forfeited national stewardship. It was a case of "under-fidelity" (to use Matthew Arnold's phrase) to their ideal, Righteousness, and so of failure; as the Greeks are an example of failure by "over-fidelity" to an insufficient ideal, artistic Perfection, or Beauty.

The Failure of Other Nations. How May Our Nation Fail? How Succeed?

A man, a nation, must feed the heart hunger of the living Lord of the centuries, or wither, like the fig tree, on the roadside of the progress of mankind.

Questions

1. Why may we conclude that our Lord was not angry when he cursed the fig tree?

2. Distinguish between an acted and a spoken parable.

3. In what respects was the Jewish nation appointed to the religious leadership of the world? Their success and failure. Who are the leaders of the world in religion today, and why?

4. What were the special gifts of the Greeks? Of the Romans? What did these nations do for the world?

5. In "the fulness of times" Christ came. What is meant by "fulness of the times"?

6. What special events occurred between 1492

(the discovery of America) and 1608-20 (the settlement of Jamestown and Plymouth)?

7. What did the historian Fiske call "the greatest turning-point in modern times," and why?

8. Name four things of which the United States is trustee for the rest of the world. Can you think of others?

9. What is meant by forfeited stewardship?

10. What if we fail?

II

STEWARDSHIP AND REDEMPTION

I

God's Gift of Life Implies a Call to Serve.

There is an interpretation of stewardship which lays the obligation upon all—non-Christian as well as Christian. If only one acknowledges God, life itself must be conceived as a trust from him. The other alternative is atheism; the atheism which sees only self and selfish interests, and which has held the field for generations with its plump and comfortable dogmatism, "What's mine's my own, and I'll do what I please with it."

What Hast Thou that Thou Didst Not Receive? 1 Cor. 4 : 7

The argument in reply to this atheism of selfishness has in recent years grown to great volume and cogency, and it has carried conviction to wide circles and through high ranges of intelligence.

The Duty of Unselfish Service

The selfish capitalist is doubtless still with us, but he has seen a great light, and generally speaking, he knows perfectly well that wealth must serve society, or society will confiscate it; ways will be found. Industry is a form of social

By Capital
By Industry

service; not a device for private gain. The factory must help men; this is its primary function. To conceive it as a means of piling up dividends to be hoarded in miserly selfishness or to be squandered in enervating luxuries is to acknowledge that one is hopelessly behind the times.

By Public Office

The appeal rings through the halls of legislation: "Public office is a public trust." It rings through commerce: "The only justification of profits is service." It rings through industry: "The surplus for the Common Good." And the struggles of the present hour are the struggles incident to the rearrangement of our total life in conformity with these principles: they are the birthpangs of a new social order, in which, when it arrives, the love of money will be acknowledged to be a root of all kinds of evil, in which the ambition to be rich will be displaced by the ambition to serve, in which worth will no longer be estimated in terms of money, but in terms of helpfulness, as when a young woman said, "I'd rather marry a man who was worth a million and didn't have a cent, than to marry a man who had a million and wasn't worth a cent."

By Commerce

The Love of Money a Root of All Kinds of Evil. Specify Examples in Proof

A New Definition of Worth

All this, I say, is part of the social philosophy now already widely current and sure to win its

way everywhere. This appears to be what Mr. John Galsworthy means when he says, "Education is the most sacred concern, indeed the only hope, of a nation." People of education see that cooperation is necessary to social order and well-being; that in a society as complicated as ours, dependent as it is on a vast machinery of cooperation, a spirit of cooperation on the part of all is essential. Or as Mr. Henry Adams put it, "The world becomes daily a vast powder-plant, a power-house of stupendous forces wherein a few selfish fools may at any moment bring on irretrievable disaster." Invoking the aid of science, we may organize what Henry M. Alden called a sociological millennium, a perfect ethical system of adjustments, so beautiful in its proportions as to counterfeit the effects of Grace, deceiving even the elect.

Educated Selfishness May Devise Cooperative Machinery, and then Wreck It

One is loath to point out the defects, the inevitable insufficiency of such a scheme. But at its best, it is only an educated selfishness which is enthroned over this artificially constructed commonwealth. The most enlightened self-interest is inadequate for the task of conceiving and building a permanent society, precisely for the reason that selfishness is not made unselfishness by being refined. Accordingly the best social order

Enlightened Self-Interest Can Never Build a Permanent Social Order

it can build waits only a supreme test when, lo! its most loyal citizens will desert the state in concern for self, and then the Deluge!

The More Widely the Ideal of Service is Accepted, the Better

This does not mean that it is useless to teach stewardship, the stewardship of life—with all its powers and resources—in the most general way. It is in every way important to say that all men are trustees on behalf of their fellows of whatever capacities they possess. The more generally this view of life is adopted the better. It will prepare us for the revelation, already plain to many, that every program of social reconstruction waits for a *certain kind of person;* and it will open the way for a new proclamation of Christianity whose main task and achievement is the reproduction of the Jesus type of man all round the globe.

John 3:3-5

II

Children of the Flesh and Children of the Spirit. John 3 : 6

Here we pass into a wholly new realm, the realm of the redeemed, the twice-born, the children of the Spirit. Indeed these two words may stand for the two realms—Enlightenment and Redemption. There is here no intimation that enlightenment is antithetic to redemption or that redemption is antithetic to enlightenment. But from the point of view of Christianity redemp-

tion is fundamental, primary, enlightenment is superficial, secondary. Gautama, Voltaire, Gœthe: Paul, Augustine, Bunyan. These two groups of names will serve to point the contrast, and they enable us to see the contention of Christianity that not education (à la Galsworthy), but the absolute salvation achieved for us men by our Lord Jesus Christ is the only hope of the nation, of the world. And it is this because it provides for and secures the type of person we now see we must have if society is not to sink down and dissolve in a ruck and welter of putrescent selfishness.

Some Examples: Name Others

No one who knows the history of vernacular schools in the Western world, will need to be reminded that Christianity has been a nursing-mother to education; nor will he need to be told that there is no conflict between the truth of religion and the truth of science. It remains true that men who have been saved by faith in the forgiveness of sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, and who have accepted the will of God as the law of their life—even without the enlightenment of the schools—such men know the ultimate secret of unselfish service; and no matter what the provocation they always stop short of rebellion against the will of God, and so also

Christianity and Education

short of the violation of the rights of others. Thus restrained by grace from violence against others, they are constrained by grace to serve others, and this to the ends of the earth.

Why it Is that Christians Are Alone Available for the Work of the Kingdom of God

Christianity predicates and produces this difference in persons irrespective of all other disciplines whatsoever. It bases its program on the saved man, in whom self-interest has been slain, but who is alive forevermore. Egoism crucified, he lives in him who died and rose again. His heart trembles and is enlarged with an immeasurable gratitude for this gift of new life, and what is impossible to the natural man—*pure disinterestedness*—has become natural to him, now that Christ lives in him to renew, to energize, to direct.

The Denial of Self at the Cross Is Deeper Than Self-Denial

At the cross—the symbol of death—he passed out of death into life, and there learned the law of the new Kingdom of Love. Beyond that no further sacrifice is possible. The giving of life is now the joy of life. Here is the explanation of a man like David Livingstone, who protested that he had never made a sacrifice in his life. Lieutenant Dawson, in "Out to Win" (p. 15), writes of the spirit of the American soldier in France: "When one has faced up to an ultimate self-denial giving becomes a habit. One becomes

eager to be allowed to give all, to keep none of life's small change. The fury of an ideal fevers us. We become fanatical to outdo our own best record in self-surrender. Many of us, if we are alive when peace is declared, will feel an uneasy reproach that perhaps we did not give enough."

"Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3 : 16). The logic of this appeal is irresistible for those who accept the first half of the proposition. Compare 2 Corinthians 5 : 16-21, where the apostle Paul grounds his whole career on the reconciling love of God in Christ and conceives of his life as an ambassadorship on behalf of Christ to all the world. Purchased unto God in the blood of Christ, he is bound in the same bundle of life with his Redeemer, and the life that he now lives is not his, but Christ's, who lives in him. (Gal. 2 : 19, 20.) Possessing Christ in this way, he possesses all things in him—all things except his very self: that is possessed by Christ. (1 Cor. 3 : 22, 23.) He could say as his Lord had said, in John 17 : 10, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." And in this abounding riches his poverty was transmuted into infinite

Paul a Supreme But Typical Christian

wealth—"as having nothing yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6 : 10).

III

The Full New Testament Meaning of Stewardship

What becomes of stewardship in such an interpretation of Redemption? It is swallowed up in a blessed partnership and comradeship of service. "No longer do I call you servants, because the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). Here a trusteeship faithfully fulfilled passes through fellowship into a community and identity of interest in which all inferior relationships are transcended in a blessed oneness of life and love and labor.

Accordingly, it is to the redeemed that stewardship, in the large New Testament meaning of the word, is wholly congenial. They are ready; and they quickly acknowledge its sway in all their life. My life, my health, my intelligence, my character, my truth, my children, my time, my property—all these have been redeemed in the precious blood of Christ, and they are mine only as a trust from God, and are to be administered in his will for the benefit of every member of the race.

Summary

What has been said may be summarized as follows:

1. Social philosophy may and does teach stewardship.

2. But enlightenment can never guarantee that men will walk in the light they see.

3. The kind of people we must have to insure social order are produced by Christ.

4. The redeemed alone can be relied on as true stewards of the manifold grace of God; that is, for *disinterested service* on behalf of all mankind. Unless we ground our teaching of Stewardship on the fact of Redemption, we shall be building on sand; and we are sure to see our house tumble about our heads when the floods break loose!

Personal Testimony

Real Estate Man Testifies

For years I have carried "The Lord's Tithe" upon my commercial ledgers. I am sure I have gone beyond the tithe in my thinking and now have written my will so that after my wife and children are cared for, more than half of my estate shall go to our various missionary organizations.

I hope that I may administer my own estate. First, for the joy it affords, and secondly, to save

to the Cause the very heavy inheritance taxes being levied by State and Federal Governments.

I do not mean by this that I propose to stop making money, but I am more anxious to give than to get—provided it goes for the upbuilding of His kingdom. I must add that I marvel at God's bounty.

I am keenly interested in the Stewardship of life. I am giving more than half my time to constructive kingdom affairs, and rejoice that God has honored me by considering me worthy to be used of him, even in a small way.

Blessings in a Business Reverse By One Who Now Lives on One-Tenth and Distributes Nine-Tenths of His Income

I have made many so-called "good investments" of a material kind where large and legitimate profits were secured, but one of the best things that ever happened to me was when an almost universal calamity swept away all the accumulations of years, and left only a great burden of debt. The debts have been paid, thanks to God, and now as income increases I have learned the far greater pleasure of laying up treasures in heaven, rather than upon earth. Beyond this is a happy feeling that the "mammon of unrighteousness," the greatest tool of Satan, is being used to overthrow his reign and help establish the kingdom of God on the earth.

Questions

1. What is meant by saying life is a trust from God?

2. May I do what I please with my own? How far and in what sense is my life mine?

3. In what sense is my business mine? Or my position?

4. Is the ambition to be rich right? What is *worth?*

5. Why is selfishness dangerous for society?

6. Is education a cure for the ills of society? How far can it carry us?

7. Distinguish enlightenment and redemption by some examples.

8. What has Christianity done for education?

9. What is Christianity's program and method for a better social order?

10. Distinguish *self-denial* and the *denial of self.*

III

THE PROFIT MOTIVE AND THE SERVICE MOTIVE

I asked a banker, "Why are you in the banking business?" He answered, "For financial considerations." "You mean profits," I said. "Yes," said he.

The Usual Motives of the Business Career

Of course men are in business for profits. The usual motives of the business career run in the following series: a living, a better living, a luxurious living, a fortune, a fortune for the children, power in the market, to be "in the game." We must make a living for ourselves and for those dependent upon us. And until this is achieved a primary necessity is unprovided for. When it is achieved and we pass into the class of comfortable livers, of easy competence, desire quickly springs up for more, and then still more, as above.

Wealth and Happiness

Probably most masters of great wealth could truthfully testify that they were happiest when hard work yielded only a comfortable living;

that beyond that stage the increment of happiness did not correspond with the increase of riches. For when ambition for power takes the place of actual need as the motive of the business life, other interests multiply to complicate and confuse the simplicity of the man's scheme of life. Thus the love of money becomes a root of *all kinds of evil,* on the principle, as Emerson stated it, that "nature takes out of the man what she puts in his pocket."

Deterioration of Character Under the Profit Motive

Now, it will generally be acknowledged that character is subjected to subtle tests under the profit motive; that the passion for profits easily displaces the higher interests, that accordingly a business career bent on profits is likelier to issue in deterioration of character than a professional career bent on professional eminence. A business friend of mine confessed to me that business "tends to make a man absent-minded about the rest of the world," "to lose interest in one's fellows"; and another said, "The more I have the meaner I feel." It was in some such view of business success that Bishop Spalding said, "The ability to make and save money carries with it the destruction of the impulse to give it away." Certain it is that all of us have heard it said of a certain type, "The

more he has the harder it is to get anything from him." No deadlier blight ever settles on the soul than the blight of avarice. And it begins to be possible when profits exceed necessary expenditure. When a man sees that his business makes wealth a possibility he is at once in peril of passing under the spell of accumulation, the passion to accumulate grows by what it feeds on, and often before he is aware of what is happening the "fortunate" man is a victim.

Miser + Y = Misery

Shakespeare has made Macbeth acknowledge the gangrenous spread:

> There grows
> In my most ill-composed affection, such
> A stanchless avarice, that, were I king,
> I should cut off the nobles for their lands.

The only way to fortify one's character against this steady and terrible deterioration is to substitute for the profit motive the motive of service.

The Business of Doing Good

In 1915, Mr. Andrew Carnegie was called to testify before the Industrial Relations Commission. In reply to the stock question, "What is your business?" he said, with a twinkle of his eye and a trace of a smile, "My business is to do all the good I can." There comes to one's mind the couplet,

Happy were men if they but understood
There is no safety but in doing good.

No safety; aye, and no wealth but in doing good. Here another objective, doing good, looms beyond money-getting as the true incentive. And when this higher objective is adopted two results follow. The more obvious result is the direct contribution to the general good, and this catches attention and elicits praise. Less obvious perhaps, but no less important, is the constraint the new motive imposes on business methods, eliminating all unworthy practises and lifting the whole enterprise to new levels; and, in its reactions on the character of the business man producing the most salutary results of all. Society benefits in the direct contribution to social well-being and in the improvement of business methods, and the individual business man becomes a better man.

Results of this Higher Objective

Here are the final tests of a given business. Is society benefited? Is the man a better man? Let it be granted that the business is "legitimate," that the young man is capable, honest. He "succeeds" in the business sense. It were better never to succeed than to find that my success has hurt the general good and corrupted my own soul.

The Final Test of Business Success: Has It Made Me a Better Man?

Reactions, Good and Bad, on Character of the Business Life. Specify By Numerals, 1, 2, 3, etc.

Let us note, with some detail, the reactions of the business life on personal character. For one thing it is a busy life, and our task is our life preserver. Idleness is a vice, and business men who succeed in these days are generally men who scorn delights and live laborious days. They develop self-reliance, decision of character, and a deepened honor and integrity. The square deal is the only sure road, and trickery is nowhere despised more hotly than by the high-minded business man of today. All these are so much to the good. On the other side we shall have to set down a certain cocksureness and a tendency to apply it beyond the range of his specialty. Then the deference of others tends to breed a brand of conceit which the successful business man is not always able to conceal. This conceit sometimes takes the form of contempt of those who fail, and of the poor in general. "You are poor because you deserve to be."

The Service Motive May Control in Every Line of Legitimate Business

These reactions—and I am only hinting at several—on character appear no matter what the ultimate motive may be. But when the *service motive* is called in, the whole atmosphere changes. The man's business becomes his way of doing good. Is he a farmer? His business is his contribution to feeding and clothing his

fellow men. Is he a merchant? His business is his way of bringing the products of the earth to the ultimate consumer. And so on of other lines of business. Of the profits of the business he will keep himself and those dependent upon him in full efficiency as servants of the general good and provide against their ever being a charge upon the community. Of the surplus profits, that is those which remain after the above needs are met, he will seek to promote a better, a worthier life for all men all around the globe. Such a man can say quite simply, and without a trace of pious cant, "Whatsoever I do, whether I eat or drink, I do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10 : 31).

Summary

What, now, are the reactions on character of such an attitude to one's business?

1. It checks the downward pull of the money motive, reverses the direction of attention from self to others, breaks the sinister spell of accumulation. In a word, it meets our Lord's negative injunction, "Lay not up *for yourselves.*"

2. And it opens the way for his positive injunction, "Seek first the kingdom of God."

3. On our Lord's paradox, "He that loseth his life findeth it," there begins at once an enlargement of one's interests, through quickened

sympathy, and this may go on to infinity! In place of narrowness revolving around the old center, self, an ever-widening circle of helpfulness revolving around the new center, Christ, and finding its propulsive power in him. In place of the contraction and constriction of a ministry to self, the expansion and freedom of a ministry to the whole race.

Thus under the gracious discipline of the service motive men grow great after the manner of Paul and David Livingstone, and they prove that none of us need to surrender to the pettiness so easy to us, to the meanness so congenial to the unregenerate nature.

We have all known examples of this high type among hero saints. But we may now expect to see them in the marts of trade, in halls of legislation, everywhere. For God is calling not only ministers and missionaries and teachers to this high level. He is calling business men also, by his grace, to renounce the motive of profits, to adopt the motive of service, and so to enter into the fellowship of apostles, prophets, martyrs.

> O blest communion, fellowship divine,
> We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
> Yet all are one in thee, for all are thine.
> Hallelujah!

Personal Testimony

The president of a great department store:

"It was the greatest relief of my life when I gave up the ambition to be a rich man. Now I have no interest in making money except as I can give it away."

The president of a long-established trust company:

"I have run this business for forty years for the kingdom of heaven's sake and for no other reason whatsoever."

A farmer of very extensive farming operations:

"I run this farm for Jesus' sake. Some time ago a hailstorm swept through this section and beat down the crops. While my neighbors were whining I looked up and said, 'Lord, you are the heaviest partner in this business; and if you stand it, I can.'"

Questions

1. What are the usual motives of business?
2. What is the relation between wealth and happiness?
3. What are the reactions on character of the passion for profits?

4. Give some examples of the blight of avarice. Did you ever know a miser?

5. Why are philanthropists praised? Abused?

6. What is the final test of business success?

7. Name the probable effects of the business life on character—good and bad.

8. Can the motive of service apply in any business career? Give examples.

9. Interpret "He that loseth his life findeth it."

10. Isaiah 23 : 18 connects merchandise and holiness. Do you know any business men whom you would call saints? How may a counting-room become a sanctuary?

IV

UNRIGHTEOUS STEWARDS

Distinction Between Embezzlement and Ordinary Theft

Embezzlement is a very ugly crime. In English law the definition of it arose out of the necessity of distinguishing it from ordinary theft. Larceny was the taking of property out of the possession of the owner, and did not cover the appropriation to one's own use of property committed as a trust. Servants and others were thus able to steal with impunity goods entrusted to them by their masters. Accordingly a statute of Henry VIII enacted that it should be made a felony in servants to convert to their own use caskets, jewels, money, goods, or chattels delivered to them by their masters.

Some Examples

It is pay-day; and a clerk with the pay-roll and the cash in the envelopes sets out to the mine to pay off the miners. On the way a sudden opportunity of sure escape confronts him, and he disappears—a clean get-away with a big pile of money. He converted the money to his own use as a thief and became an embezzler.

The cashier begins by secret borrowings of small sums; he goes on to false entries in the ledger, and finally makes off to Canada with all the portable assets of the bank. He is not an ordinary thief, and his crime is far more gross than that of an ambiguous stranger who filches your purse or your automobile. He was a trustee. The property was in his charge precisely for the reason that the president and the directors had judged him as an honest man, had confided in him as incapable of converting to his own use trust funds—their confidence and the sacredness of the trust and the integrity and correctness of his previous dealings—all these combine to enhance the baseness of his present conduct. He is an embezzler.

The Minister Has the Gospel as a Trust

It is in some such context as the above that Paul's word to Timothy properly falls. He wrote: "I render thanks to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has made me able for this; he considered me trustworthy and appointed me to the ministry, though I had formerly been a blasphemer and a persecutor and a wanton aggressor" (1 Tim. 1 : 12, 13, Moffatt's translation). His ministry was a trust committed to him by his Lord, who believed him trustworthy, believed that he would not make merchandise of

the truth, that he would not adulterate it to suit the ears of the hearers (2 Cor. 2 : 17), in a word, that he would not be a grafter but would rightly divide the word of truth. To the same effect is his word to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9: 16-18) that his boast was not that he was a preacher—he had to be that since against his will he had been appointed a steward and must discharge his trust—but that, being a preacher, he could make the gospel without charge. And again: "This is how you are to look upon us as servants of Christ and stewards of God's secret truths—now in stewards your first requirement is that they must be trustworthy" (1 Cor. 4: 1, 2, Moffat's translation). And still again: "Hence as I hold this ministry by God's mercy to me, I never lose heart in it; I disown those practises which very shame conceals from view; I do not go about it craftily; I do not falsify the word of God. I state the truth openly and so commend myself to every man's conscience before God" (2 Cor. 4 : 1, 2).

Preaching the Gospel for Pay

From this account of the matter it is clear that the apostle Paul would have considered himself an embezzler if he had sold his knowledge of Christ at so much per hearer, if he had lined his own purse by making gain of the gos-

pel. And his brother Peter was like him in this, for when Simon offered to pay him for the power to confer the Holy Spirit, Peter repudiated the base suggestion with sudden revulsion—"Thy money perish with thee" (Acts 8 : 20). And their brother Elisha was like them, for when Naaman, the Syrian general, attempted to pay him for his healing the prophet said, "As Jehovah liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none" (2 Kings 5 : 16).

The Preacher's Living: How Provided?

This is not to say that Paul did not expect the preacher to get his living by preaching—"They that preach the gospel must live of the gospel" (1 Cor. 9 : 14). It is rather to say that the servant trusts his master to supply his needs while he is discharging his duty as a servant, and that the master trusts his servant not to take advantage of his trusteeship to make secret gains by manipulating in his own interest that with which he has been intrusted.

The parable of the Pounds: Your Interpretation

Similarly, our Lord in the parable of Luke 19, makes the nobleman put the capital in the hands of his servants, saying, "Go into business." Evidently the master expected his servants to live while they were using the capital committed to them. But when he returned they said, "Thy pound hath gained ten pounds," and

they turned over the original capital and all the increase to him. But what about the expenses of the business, and the living of the servants while thus engaged? Undoubtedly these were reckoned in making up the report of the total profits—as we would say, after deducting all legitimate costs, the business has yielded so much. And Jesus puts a fine word in the mouth of the capitalist: "Well done. You have shown yourself capable and trustworthy. I will name you the president of the company" (Luke 19: 17).

Legitimate Costs: Some Subtle Temptations Here

Now, the possibility of embezzlement lies under the phrase "legitimate costs." Suppose the servant had said: "This is a big opportunity, the profits are going to be far heavier than my master will expect. I will set aside a fair return for him, and then exploit the business for all it will bear and appropriate the excess profits to myself. He need never know! I will be a rich man when this is all over." Will he? Is he likely to be better off in the place of the unrighteous steward (Luke 16 : 1), trying to feather his nest by a last dishonesty at the expense of his master, or in the place of the faithful men who trust the generosity of their master to provide legitimate opportunity for further and more important service?

But embezzlement might lurk under "legitimate costs" in another sense. Suppose the servant had said: "I cannot open a separate account for the excess profits for myself, but there can be no objection, in law or in conscience, if I build myself a fine house and conserve my own strength by employing a retinue of servants. A man with an opportunity like this has no right to make a slave of himself. I must live in a style befitting the dignity of my position and the wealth of my master." It is the old question of luxury again. What is luxurious living? Where does parsimony end and luxury begin? Perhaps we must give up trying to answer; but we can at least be sure that selfishness is very subtle and can make plausible arguments to prove that it is unselfishness. We can also be sure that our own safety is in being as far away from the dividing-lines as possible. And in this our Lord is an example. Do not be anxious, he said, about food and drink and clothing; the Gentile mind is bent upon things, but you must not be like that. He who clothes the lily and feeds the birds will see that you do not lack.

Draw a Line Between Luxury and Parsimony

The Gentile Mind and the Christian

Enough has been said to make clear two things. The first is that in the New Testament teaching stewardship is a very big word and

covers the whole of life, capacities, whether of truth or of property, opportunity—everything we are and have must be held under this conception. And the second is that there is a constant and often a near possibility of embezzlement in the administration of our trust.

The Principles Jesus Settled in the Temptation (Matt. 4 : 11)

Our Lord in the thrilling consciousness of his sonship to God was driven from the Jordan into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He had been entrusted with a supreme and unique power and appointed to a supreme and unique career. The subtlety of the temptation appears when we note that the suggestions, one by one, are addressed to the exact state of the Lord's consciousness. "If thou art the Son of God (as thou art), command that these stones become bread." The temptation was to convert to his own use powers which had been entrusted to him for the benefit of all men. We need not raise the question whether he could have retained his power after a prostitution of it to selfish uses, for he instantly repelled the infamous proposition to feed himself. And we see in the cross the final demonstration of the principle he adopted in the beginning to commit himself to God his Father in the confidence of fatherly protection and complete vindication at the last.

That is to say, he was a faithful steward of his own nature and mission and of the manifold grace of God. He held these in trust for the race, and he did not defraud the race of its rights in them, nor his Father by diverting them from his purpose for the race.

Use or Lose

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25 : 14) our Lord sets forth the principle, *use or lose.* The man who tried to keep his money by hiding it in a napkin, lost it. And in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19 : 11), he carries the implication that the use of the nobleman's capital must be according to his mind: "Trade ye herewith till I come" (Luke 19 : 13); his return kept in mind would hold them to his mind in the administration of the trust. Here the direct crime of embezzlement shades off into the forfeiture of one's stewardship by a timid handling of the responsibility, or by a misconception of the purposes of the principal in the business.

Summary

To sum up:

1. Stewardship, in the New Testament conception of it, throws its constraint over all we are and have—life, capacities, truth, property, opportunity.

2. The correlative of stewardship in the sphere of sin is embezzlement.

3. Embezzlement may take several forms:

(1) Direct appropriation of a trust to one's own use. (2) Withholding a part of the returns in making settlement. (3) A life of self-indulgence out of the proceeds of the trust. (4) And it shades off into the vices of timidity and slothful misunderstanding of our principal's intention in conferring the stewardship, followed by forfeiture and rejection.

4. The reward of faithfulness is not more pay. Since life is secure in the goodness and wisdom and resource of God, why should we want more pay? No, the reward is enlargement of capacity, and, in connection with this, a larger responsibility and opportunity.

Some Examples: Name Others

The reader will have no difficulty in tracing out the practical applications of these principles. Two examples must suffice here in the way of suggestions. Here is a man who has large capacity for knowledge, for truth, and for the ministry of truth to his fellows. His knowledge of facts, of truth brings him into fellowship with the omniscient God and constitutes a stewardship of these on behalf of God on the one hand and of his fellow men on the other. The embezzler would say: "This knowledge, this truth are mine for my own use, aggrandizement, fame. I

will exploit them to spread abroad a sounding name."

The faithful steward would say: "O God, I think my thoughts after thee! Help me to share them, in thy name and according to thy will, with all men."

Here is another man whose capacities take the practical turn. He is executive in his make-up, a genius in business affairs—whatever he touches turns to gold. The embezzler would say: "I can go to the top; I can dominate the business world in my line; I will make millions and millions, found a family and endow it with untold wealth to remote generations; and millions of men shall know me as their master, and envy me as king of finance."

The faithful servant would say: "I am a pensioner on the bounty of my Father in heaven; I am a trustee of that bounty on behalf of my fellows. Their need is my opportunity to help, my abundance shall be their supply."

Division of Labor in the Kingdom of God

The finest cooperation offered by our times is the comradeship of the two types, the stewardship of truth and the stewardship of wealth; the one group heralding and interpreting the kingdom of God, and the other financing the enterprise, and both alike sharing the joy of their

Lord in bringing on the consummation when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ.

Personal Testimony

A Lawyer's Testimony

From boyhood I was brought up in a Christian home where strong emphasis was laid upon liberal Christian giving, and the principle of tithing was taught me as a child. This I have always followed, except as stated below, and still strongly believe in.

Early in my professional life at a time when my assets amounted to between $1,500 and $2,000 I faced squarely my responsibility as to giving of my income for the Lord's work, and after considerable period of struggle I told my Lord that I was ready to do in a financial way whatever he showed me to be his will. I was led to establish the following general financial principles:

1. That as a business man my influence in the community would depend to some extent upon my financial standing, and the promptness with which I met my personal obligations, and that some of my income each year should be laid aside for investment.

2. That as the income increased I should give

a larger proportion to the Lord's work, and I have established for myself a sliding scale beginning with the tenth as a minimum. At present my gifts are running about thirty-three per cent. of my income. My experience with the percentage and sliding scale of giving has been that I have felt that each day about my professional work I was working not simply for my own support, but also for the extension of Christ's kingdom. In other words, that the business itself became a partnership in which my heavenly Father had a direct and ever-increasing interest. I believe this has been a distinct help to me in my Christian life, especially in my realization of the presence of God and Christ with me, and I also believe that it has been a help to me in business itself. As a result thereof I have made it a policy for years to take the business problems to God in prayer just as much as I would talk them over in consultation with my partner.

I may add a word as to Christian service, for I fully believe that no amount of financial giving can take the place of direct personal service. In the nature of the case no direct sliding scale or mathematical proportion can be observed in the matter of Christian service, but year by year I have been devoting an increasing amount of

time from my business to direct Christian service. At the present time it is averaging me throughout the year more than one full business day per week.

In the question of Christian service I have established two general principles: (1) That I will devote a certain proportion of time and effort in general and varied lines of Christian activity. (2) That I will devote a certain proportion of the time to specialization. For this I have chosen missions and missionary education. The two principles working together it seems to me will prevent any undue emphasis upon the speciality, and at the same time will enable me to render better service because along some one line I have made special study.

Questions

1. Define the crime of embezzlement and distinguish it from ordinary theft. Give an example.

2. What did Paul mean by saying he was a trustee of the gospel?

3. How may a preacher be an embezzler?

4. Read carefully the parable of the nobleman in Luke 19 and work out your own interpretation of it.

5. Where does my need of a living come into my program as a Christian? What is luxury? Parsimony?

6. What is our Lord's account of the Gentile mind in Matthew 6 : 24-34?

7. How did he conceive of his powers and his trusteeship?

8. What is the proper reward of faithfulness in handling a trust?

9. Give an example of trusteeship of truth—in science, in religion.

10. Give an example of trusteeship of business ability. The finest cooperation, and the calls of the times for it. Division of labor in the kingdom of God.

V

"THE CAMEL QUESTION," OR CAN A RICH MAN BE SAVED?

Heine Rais a Prickly Question

Heinrich Heine (1800-1856), the Jewish poet, was once invited by a Christian hostess to a banquet. He was the most brilliant talker in Europe, and the hostess expected him to be the life of the table. But on taking his seat he remained silent. Her ladyship called to him, "Herr Heine, why so pensive?" He, with a look around the magnificent room, and with the ironical smile characteristic of him, said, "Oh, I was just wondering what you Christians are going to do with the camel question."

There are signs that this question asked in jest may be asked in earnest, and it is time we Christians were ready with our answer, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18 : 25). Then frankly, it is im-

possible for a rich man to get in! Is this what Jesus meant to say? Some think to turn the point of his words, to foil the thrust by saying

JESUS SMILED

Humor in the Teaching of Jesus—Find Instances

when he spoke. The camel is a queer beast, and one is disposed to agree with the farmer at the circus, who, after a long look at the comical shaggy ugliness, turned away, saying, "Ther' aint no sech creetur!" And when our Lord pictured the Pharisees with meticulous scrupulosity straining out a speck of a gnat and then gulping down a whole camel, hump, hair, hoofs, and all—one can be pretty sure his face was lighted up with the humor of the idea. But one can be equally sure he did not smile when, upon seeing the great refusal of the rich young ruler, he said, "It is easier for a camel to thread his nose and head and hump and legs through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to find the gate and enter the kingdom of heaven." The Greek word here used for needle makes impossible the widely current notion that our Lord referred to the small door in the big city gate. Such an interpretation is an obvious evasion of the obvious and difficult meaning. He was far too serious here to smile. On the contrary, he is pronouncing

A Solemn Judgment

upon the love of money: he is announcing a doom. Is there any present-day meaning which we can attach to these words? I believe there is, and that it is particularly pertinent to the men of today.

Distinguish Kingdom o Heaven an Heaven

1. For one thing, he is not here thinking of *heaven.* The most wide-spread practical error in Christendom is the notion that the phrase "kingdom of heaven" in the New Testament refers to the state of blessedness after death. Our Lord once said to a young man, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12 : 34). He did not mean that this young man was soon to die and go to heaven! He meant, rather, that with a slight further adjustment of his attitude and interests he would be right with God and with men; he would be a citizen of the new society Jesus had come to build. So of the young ruler. Jesus had set before him two ways of living—the way of serving others and the way of accumulating wealth. And he hoped service would seem so beautiful that the fascination of money-getting would be broken. In case it had been broken, the ruler would, on the instant, have joined the company of great souls who make up

Two Ways of Living

the kingdom. But no: the spell of his riches was too strong, and now consciously yielding himself to its power he went away sorrowful because he knew in his heart that he had made the wrong choice.

How to Become a Citizen of the Empire of Love

2. The phrases, "kingdom of God," "kingdom of heaven," mean a certain kind of society made up of people here "on earth" (Matt. 6: 10) who acknowledge God as King and who make his will the law of their life. It has been called the *Empire of Love,* for love is its light, its atmosphere, its goal. God is love, and his kingdom is the kingdom of Love, and people who share his solicitude, his sacrifice, his passion to give (John 3 : 16) are members of his kingdom: they are saved.

Name Other Rich Men Who Are Members of the Kingdom

3. It follows, of course, that no rich man, *as such,* can enter that kingdom. Many rich men are in it, from Abraham to William E. Dodge. But they did not get in *as rich men.* In point of fact, most of these men made the adjustment by which they entered the kingdom in their youth, before riches had come to them; and, in many cases, it was the practise of the Christian virtues which insured their wealth. But to say that no rich man can be saved *as a rich man* is the same as to say that

Money Cannot Buy Character

At the Cross of Christ Distinctions, As Rich and Poor, Vanish: All Are Saved on the Same Terms

Recall Peter's instant revulsion when the sorcerer tried to buy the power of conferring the Holy Spirit: "Thy money perish with thee!" (Acts 8 : 20).

> Nothing in my hand I bring,
> Simply to thy cross I cling!

No man is ever saved, is ever admitted into the society of the King of love, except as a pauper, both as respects moral worth and material wealth. It is because he sees and acknowledges his unspeakable destitution, his bankruptcy of soul, that he cries, "Save, Lord!" (Matt. 14: 30). No man can be saved while his attention is divided, while his surrender is incomplete. And it is not a hard saying, it is only common sense applied to religion, to say that a man counting over his riches is incapable of the absorption, the enthusiasm for goodness which we designate by the word faith. It is equally plain that no poor man is saved *as a poor man;* a man conning over his poverty and calculating whether it might be to his advantage to become a Christian can never become a Christian so long as that mood lasts. Men are saved, enter the kingdom,

only in their bare humanity, and only when their sin has become hateful to them and their spiritual destitution appals them, and the love of Christ overwhelms them; and, renouncing self and the world and all things, they embrace the all-sufficing grace of God. May a rich man have this experience? Certainly; but the thought of his riches is, at the time of it, as far from him as the east is from the west.

The New Relation to Property Which Results from the Experience of Being Saved

4. But this saved rich man must soon come back to commonplace facts. And when the exhilaration of his conversion, the thrill of his entrance into the kingdom, passes, he will find himself still a rich man. He had for the time completely forgotten his possessions in the new and holy passion for the righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit which Paul identifies with the kingdom of God. (Rom. 14 : 17.) What now is going to be his attitude toward his wealth?

He Had to Renounce Everything

The Same, and not the Same. What is the Difference?

he possessed before he could become a disciple of Jesus. (Luke 14 : 25-35.) How will he feel about his houses and lands, his stocks and bonds, after saying good-bye to them all? How will he handle them, what use will he make of them?

1. They will be the same, yet not the same. Things that have been renounced, given up for Christ's sake, can never again look the same as when they were clung to as possessions.

A New Motive for Making Money

2. Christ has come between this man and his money; he has enthralled the man's heart and become the Lord of his life. And if the man goes on handling the properties it will be because his new Master appoints him to this line of service; and if he continues to make money he will have a new motive for doing so. That is to say, his money-making will not be in itself a full expression of his interests.

Agnes Repplier, in a recent essay ("Yale Review," January, 1918), quotes the social essayist, Edward Stanhope Martin, as follows: "A sincerely religious man may become a great money-maker, but it is safe to regard his money-making as something concurrent with his religious duty rather than as the realization of it."

Property is a Good Only As It Promotes Goodness

3. The saved rich man will find full expression, the realization of his religious duty, indeed, of his whole personality, in serving the kingdom of which he is now a member. Nothing in the conduct of his business may be allowed to violate the kingdom's law of love; the entire use of the output (product or income) must be so

ordered as to promote the doing of the will of God in the rich man himself, in his employees, in his community, and, in short, throughout all the earth.

4. Such an attitude and outlook and purpose will be his

Insurance Against the Perils

Security Against the Perils of Accumulation

of his career. A citizen of the kingdom appointed by the King to handle property must never forget that he cannot serve God *and* mammon; one can serve God or mammon, but never both at the same time. Men in certain industries have to wear masks against the special dangers of the work they are engaged in. And there is no more dangerous trade than making money. Possibly more saved men have been spoiled in character by their success in money-making than by any other single influence. To quote Bishop Spalding again: "The power to make and save money carries with it the destruction of the impulse to give it away." This is a sweeping statement and may not be wholly true, but few persons will doubt that rapid accumulation of wealth easily absorbs a man, and the purpose of service may become blurred or even forgotten in the thrilling experience of seeing one's

A Dangerous Trade. Specify the Special Dangers in Money-Making

fortune and one's power grow. The only adequate safeguard against falling in love with money, against the steady deterioration of character which so often and so widely attends upon accumulation, is the clear apprehension of Christ and his Cross and his purpose for the world, and of money as an instrument of unselfish service according to his will, to the ends of the earth. Anything clung to in selfishness corrupts the soul. Everything yielded to him who died and rose again and who reigns in glory everlasting, takes on sacredness and light from him, and in turn lifts the soul into fellowship with him. Here is the basal conception in Doctor Brownson's definition, "Property is communion with God through the material world," and it is the explanation of our Lord's warning: "Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). And again: "This is life eternal, that they know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). That is to say, life of the quintessential quality, life that is life indeed, abundant life, consists in fellowship with God, and *things*—food, drink, clothing, houses, lands—in one word, property, are a good only as they minister to fellowship

A Christian Definition of Property

with God in the individual and throughout the world.

Personal Testimony

The president of a big company in New York testifies:

A Personal Testimony

My personal experience in stewardship began in early manhood by the contagion of a good example. A friend, who subsequently entered the ministry and has received high distinction in the church, amazed his companions by his liberality to the church as a tither. He was a poor law student, supporting himself by sacrifice and rigid economy, but was then, as since, "rich toward God."

It was a challenge I accepted in those days when my business career was commencing, and the practise of stewardship since that time has been a guiding principle in my Christian life and business activities.

I well remember my first "tithe envelope" and the one dollar placed therein weekly out of my first salary from the concern I am now serving as president twenty-five years after.

The habit of proportionate giving with the tithe as a minimum and the actual disbursement frequently ranging from fifteen per cent. to

twenty per cent. has had the following very definite results in my life:

1. It produced a sense of satisfaction and contentment as to financial matters, dispelling anxiety as to future business success and well-being.

2. It has promoted system and order in all personal finances, both as to disbursements and accumulation.

3. It has permitted a growing investment in the enterprises of the kingdom as God has prospered me, with large dividends of joy and gladness.

4. Stewardship has been an expanding principle in its application to all of life, involving Christian service and also social, civic, and commercial obligations.

5. This principle has led me to the conviction, which I have followed, that Christian stewards after making proper and ample provision for those dependent on them should make generous provision in their wills for the work of the kingdom which shall serve to perpetuate present gifts and "carry on" when they shall have departed this life.

A Banker and Mayor of His City

As years have passed, and especially in these recent years, a conviction has come very definitely that the relation between a Christian man and

his heavenly Father is that of actual partnership; that a man's mind and heart should be wide open to God to say just what he will about money and time to be put into the service of the kingdom. Christ's kingdom first, home and friends second, business and its rewards third—that is my ideal and prayer for myself. God has given me victories that are very reassuring and a call to greater daring and faith.

Questions

1. Give examples of humor in the teachings of Jesus.

2. What did he mean by "the eye of a needle"?

3. Distinguish between "heaven" and the "kingdom of heaven." In what sense was the rich young ruler not far from the kingdom of heaven?

4. On what terms does any one become a member of the Empire of Love?

5. Give some examples of rich men you know who are in the kingdom of God.

6. What is meant by saying that rich and poor are both alike to God?

7. What new relation to his property is established when a rich man surrenders to Christ?

8. What new motive comes into his life as a money-maker?

9. Why is it sometimes true that the more a man has the harder it is to get him to give anything?

10. Give illustrations of the truth of 1 Timothy 6 : 10, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." Compare 1 Timothy 6 : 6-10 and 6 : 17, 18.

VI

EVANGELISM—THE NEW APPEAL

The Older Appeals

When I became a Christian the life after death bulked large in my youthful mind. The fear of dying unprepared, rarely acknowledged, was always there. I once dreamed of the judgment and saw myself separated from my father and mother, brothers and sisters in the dreadful assize. The sermons I heard on such texts as "Prepare to meet thy God" were all keyed to and got their cogency of appeal from the inevitableness and the finality of death. And being saved was interpreted as being safe and happy in the next world. Even the appeal for Christian work, for missions, was based on the obligation to insure to others the same boon—safety and happiness in the next world. The heathen were sinking into Christless graves; my friends were unprepared for the dying hour. These statements may raise in some minds questions as to how far back and where my youth was spent. No matter when or where, I have given

a true statement, and I cannot now recall any other appeals than those I have named. I am far from any mood of criticism when I think of the people who brought me into the Christian faith and fold. My gratitude toward them rather inclines me to criticize those who criticize them—those who today affect a mild disdain of old-fashioned notions about heaven and hell, and who slight or slur the immeasurable hopes which lie beyond the veil.

Their Permanent Value

> For all thy saints who from their labors rest,
> Who thee by faith before the world confessed,
> Thy name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
> Hallelujah!

Surely for weary pilgrims there is rest at the end of the journey. "And now, Father, come I to thee!" exclaimed our Lord in exultation at the near approach of the end. And there never can come a time when his people will cease from longing to be with him where he is to behold his glory, or when they can, in their witnessing to him, forego the appeal of the heaven he fills, or the horror of the outer darkness, which, according to his word, was prepared as an abode of wretchedness, not for human beings, but for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25 : 41; compare Rev. 20 : 10.)

The Appeals of Today

In the work of the many evangelists today the appeals I heard in my childhood have given place to the appeal of the immediate return of the Lord. Repent, for the Lord is at hand. The Bridegroom cometh. Be ready to meet him. The King is near, and with the breath of his nostrils he will slay the wicked. (2 Thess. 2 : 8.) Thus believers are bidden to rejoice and sinners to repent.

Here again I am in no mood to criticize, for I am sure that Christ is far too large to be held in our categories, and if it be that he is preached, "therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1 : 15-18).

The Shifting Emphasis

Yet no one will question the statement that evangelical thought has passed or is passing into another zone; that Christianity as it confronts the non-Christian man and the non-Christian world, is acquiring new emphasis, and in particular that the older evangelistic appeal has lost its impressiveness and a new appeal is coming into use. There is nothing strange in this. A thousand times already the old gospel has adapted itself to the new age, and onward through all ages it will bear the good tidings of God's saving grace in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

What is this new appeal?

Negative Statement the Reason for Becoming a Christian. The Word "Eternal" the New Testament. The Word "Lost" in Luke 15

1. Stated negatively, it is not an appeal to fear, to the instinct for safety, least of all to the fear of death. Undoubtedly the fear of death remains. But one does not hear now in evangelical pulpits or evangelistic sermons "Where will you spend eternity?"—eternity being conceived as stretching onward in a quantitative reach of everlastingness from the moment of death, and not in the New Testament sense of qualitative, quintessential life, out of all time and space relationships. On the contrary, the eternal loss of the soul is today interpreted in the light of the actual present damage one suffers, the shrinkage of his personality, who lives in the flesh only; that is, in space and time only, with no sense of eternal relationships. He who declines the "dome more vast" must content himself with a "low-vaulted" existence, whose small delights are but one remove or two above the animal's. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world but suffer damage in his soul" in the process? So that at the end he has the world but no soul to appropriate it. In the light of this present actual damage, the lot of such a person, when for him time has forever passed, is inconceivably terrible. But it is the

present damage rather than the ultimate lot which is the point of emphasis today.

Positive Statements Compare "Safety First" and the Passion to Serve

2. Stated positively, the new appeal is a call to service, not to safety, but to the perils of a huge undertaking. "Safety first" is an impossible motto for the front-line trenches; and it is equally impossible, indeed it is preposterous in the appeal for recruits of the Christian cause. The rest and peace Christ offers are not the rest and peace of a quiescent life, but the full contentment, the poise and calm of one wholly committed to the Grand Design of the kingdom of God on earth, and who for that reason can never rest while injustice is done, and who craves no peace till his Lord is enthroned over all the world and over all the life of the world.

> Once again the bugle calls me;
> Now I see white Victory shine;
> After all the fiery tumult,
> Love, the world shall still be thine.

The Weakness of the Evangelistic Appeal, and the Reason Why it is Weak

And when this appeal is backed in this money-making, money-loving age by a church which has conquered the love of money, whose members have renounced the passion for profits, who see the Cross of Christ between them and their mills and their stores and their banks, who acknowledge God's signature in blood on every dollar

of their property, and in whose ears the cry of the world's need drowns the squeaks of selfish desires, when, I say, the evangelistic call to service is backed by a consecration like this, we shall witness a new crusade.

But as long as men can say—whether justly or unjustly matters little—"Why should I become a Christian; I see nothing Christians are doing?" so long will our evangelism limp and men will go their way to find their career outside the church of Christ. And it will be due to a tragic misunderstanding of Him who, in sheer courage, fought his way with no weapon but love through illusion and falsehood, hatred and revenge, through oppression and cruelty to his place of preeminence in the veneration and love of mankind.

The Cross of Christ Alone Breaks the Spell of Money, and It Alone Can Win Recruits for the Service of the Kingdom in All the World. Why This Is So

But we have not covered the case by the statement of our Lord's challenge: "Follow me." He means adopt my principles, my program, and join me in pushing this program to completion through all the world. But what avails this call to heroism when those who hear it have no desire to heed it? Such a call sounds like thunder to people who have already broken with sin, and who see and feel the needs of the world. But to people soaked in selfishness, who acknowledge

no call to serve anybody but themselves, people in search of new sensations, whom the feasts of the far country entirely satisfy, to whom the Father's house is only a remote dream, if they do not deny it altogether—to such people the call to serve is preposterous! They say roundly: "Why should I concern myself about the good of mankind? It takes all my time and resources to have a good time for myself."

This spell of worldliness can be broken only by love—the love of God, the patient, all-comprehending, all-forgiving love of God, the love which sees us in our abysmal blunders, which pursues us in infinite pity, longing to set our feet in the right way, to enswathe us in its peace, to share with us a fathomless fellowship of life and truth and power.

Now, in point of fact, people never see that love except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> O love of God, O sin of man,
> In this dread act your strength is tried,
> But victory remains with love,
> Jesus our Lord is crucified.

Here is revealed the infinite mercy, which is resentment mixed with pity: the inflexibility toward sin and the tenderness toward the sinner which at once preserve the holiness of God,

while giving full scope to his love. The Cross, therefore, is the center of the Christian appeal. And the evangelism which evades it or fears to penetrate into the heart of its mystery, which knows only good advice and can only urge people to lead a better life—such an evangelism is not only shallow: it is untrue to Christianity. And while it may enlist multitudes to a "change," even to church-membership, it can never enlist them for Christ's program, for the simple reason that it has failed utterly to make clear the Christian demand—which is the death to self and sin revealed and symbolized in the Cross.

A Cattleman's Experience

Life Testimony

Dr. George W. Truett, of Dallas, Texas, has for years held special services every summer for the cattlemen and cowboys of the plains of West Texas. They come from a radius of a hundred miles, pitch tents, and remain together for ten days. At the close of a morning service in the big tent one of the big men of the plains came forward and said, "Won't you go to walk with me, please?" "Certainly." They set out toward the mouth of a cañon that opened into the plain. They walked on in silence, the preacher

wondering what it all might mean. They entered the cañon, and on turning a jutting precipice of rock they came upon a bed of sand. Here they stopped, and the cattle king said: "This is a good place. And I want you to git down here and pray. And I tell you what I want you to do. I want you to give the Lord all my land—every acre, every foot of it. And when you get through giving him the land, I want you to give him all my cattle—every head and hoof. And then don't let him git away till I have a word with him." By this time both men were in tears. There were thousands and thousands of acres and herds of cattle involved. And when Doctor Truett poured out his own heart and the property of his friend before the Lord and said amen, the older man, with sobbing utterance, said: "Now, Lord, you've got my land and you've got my cattle. Won't you please give me my boy?" Then for the first time the preacher knew of the son, who had broken his father's heart by a career of sin and crime. They returned—again in silence—to the camp. That night when he took the platform in the tent, Doctor Truett saw a young man seated beside the father at the rear of the throng. He had proceeded some ten minutes with reading

the Scriptures and simple comments when there was a stir back there and the father and son were on their way to the front. He learned afterwards that this is what occurred: The son said: "Pap, I can't stand this. I got-a-go up thar and shake hands with that preacher." They had not reached the platform before the whole multitude were swept as with a rushing mighty wind—the breath of God. The aisles were crowded, and the area about the platform was quickly filled with men breaking into tumultuous confession of sin. Of course there was no more preaching that night. Salvation had come, and "Hallelujah, 'tis done" was the song to sing.

Such a story requires no comment. But it is not out of place to point out that when everything is surrendered to God, the windows of heaven are opened, and God pours out such a blessing that there is not room enough to receive it. It was so in Malachi's time. It is so today.

Questions

1. Under what appeals did you become a Christian?

2. What exactly did John the Baptist and our Lord mean by "*Repent, for the kingdom of*

heaven is at hand?" The motive appealed to here?

3. How far are the hope of reward (heaven) and the fear of punishment (hell) legitimate as grounds of appeal?

4. Do these appear in the New Testament preaching as reasons for becoming Christians? Read through the Acts for an answer.

5. What are the chief appeals in the evangelism of today?

6. Why should we expect the Christian appeal to vary from time to time, and age to age?

7. What is the meaning of "eternal" in the New Testament?

8. Compare the fear of death (compare Hebrews 2 : 14, 15) and the hope of eternal life as motives.

9. Make out for yourself the meaning of "salvation," "save," "lost," "today salvation has come to this house" (Luke 19 : 9, 10).

10. What special backing is required for the evangelistic appeal in a money-making, money-loving age?

11. How does Christianity awaken the spirit of service in lovers of self and sin? Why is the Cross of Christ the center of all sound evangelism?

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

By way of reducing these studies to practise the following suggestions are made in the hope that readers will undertake to organize leagues of Christian stewards in their churches:

1. Make a survey of the membership and list all tithers and others who are systematic in their contributions of time, talent, money. This may be done by an informal secret ballot at a morning service previously announced. The ballot might include questions like these:

(1) Are you a tither?

(2) Do you set aside a definite proportion of income for Christian service?

(3) Are you willing to study the principles of stewardship and will you join a group for study?

2. Appoint a Stewardship Director, whose duty it shall be to call together those listed, as above, and arrange for group study of the principles. It is essential that conviction be created,

and intelligent grasp of the principles is essential to conviction. The best time for this study is the annual stewardship period beginning with Thrift Week (the third week in January).

3. The last Sunday of this period, the third Sunday in February, should be Stewardship Sunday. Careful preparation must precede. It will include circulation throughout the membership of the best single piece of literature avail-

THE PRINCIPLES OF STEWARDSHIP

1. God is the owner of all.

2. I am his Steward and must account to him for all I am and have.

3. He requires of me as a part of the expression of my Stewardship the setting apart of a definite proportion of my income for the extension of his kingdom.

4. The rest of my income, whether spent or saved, he expects me to treat also as a sacred trust.

5. My Christian Stewardship also involves a similar use of my abilities and my time.

I hereby agree regularly to set aside a definite proportion of my income, as God prospers me, to be used in my church, my community, and in all the world for the extension of the kingdom of our Lord. (2 Cor. 9 : 6, 7.)

Date..... Sign.....

able; special sermons on such texts as Matthew 5 : 20; 1 Peter 4 : 10, etc.; a card for signature such as that shown at the bottom of page 70.

4. Definite acknowledgment is essential, and a definite proportion should be named. Vagueness here is hardly distinguishable from disloyalty.

5. Follow up. Do not be discouraged. The Stewardship Director will generally be the Chairman of the Committee on the annual Every-member Canvass. And this canvass will reach those who were not present Stewardship Sunday. They should be given opportunity to sign the cards and become members of the League of Christian Stewards.

6. All this to be done not with a view to raising money, but of enriching the spiritual life of the members. Devices for extracting aciduous generosity from unwilling purses have too long discredited the treasury of the church of Christ.

7. We shall witness a great inrush of evangelistic fervor and power, when once we have lifted the administration of church life and church finance to the plane of acknowledged trusteeship under Christ of all we are and have on behalf of the community, of the world.

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